

Message Text

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EXDIS

JERUSALEM FOR CONGEN AND USDEL

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV EG IS US XF
SUBJ: PERES' VIEWS ON CURRENT STATE OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

1. ROY ATHERTON AND I LUNCHEd JANUARY 25 WITH SHIMON PERES, LEADER OF THE LABOR PARTY. ATHERTON BROUGHT HIM UP TO DATE ON THE CURRENT STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS. IN THE COURSE OF THE CONVERSATION, PERES REITERATED VIEW HE HAS PREVIOUSLY STATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT HE AND HIS PARTY WERE MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO AVOID COMPLICATING MATTERS ANY FURTHER FOR THE GOVERNMENT, AND WOULD SUPPORT ALL REASONABLE STEPS IN THE DIRECTION OF PEACE. HE IS VERY CRITICAL OF SOME OF BEGIN'S RECENT TACTICS, PARTICULARLY HIS HANDLING OF THE QUESTION OF SETTLEMENTS IN THE RAFAH AREA OF SINAI.

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HE CONTINUES TO PLACE GREAT WEIGHT ON THE NEED TO GET HUSSEIN INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS, AND ASKED WHETHER WE BELIEVED THE DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, IF IT COULD BE SATISFACTORILY CONCLUDED, WOULD DO THE TRICK. ATHERTON SAID WE COULD NOT BE SURE, BUT THAT IT WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT INCENTIVE TO HUSSEIN UNLESS IT WAS SO WATERED DOWN IN THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE EGYPTIANS

THAT IT DID NOT COME CLOSE TO HIS OFT-STATED REQUIREMENTS. MUCH WOULD DEPEND, WE ALL AGREED, ON THE ATTITUDE OF THE SAUDIS.

2. IN DISCUSSING THE DRAFT DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, PERES SAID HE SAW NO REASON PERSONALLY WHY ISRAEL COULD NOT ACCEPT PRESIDENT CARTER'S ASWAN LANGUAGE ALMOST IN ITS ENTIRETY, ALTHOUGH HE TOO SAW PROBLEMS IN THE PHRASE "THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE." THE PHRASE "IN ALL ITS ASPECTS" GAVE HIM NO PROBLEM WHATSOEVER, AND HE POINTED OUT THAT IT COULD CERTAINLY BE READ AS INCLUDING ASPECTS WHICH WERE OF CONCERN TO ISRAEL AS WELL AS TO THE OTHER PARTIES.

3. WITH REGARD TO THE THORNY QUESTION OF SINAI SETTLEMENTS, PERES DESCRIBED IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL THE VERY REAL STRATEGIC PROBLEM POSED FOR ISRAEL IF IT ABANDONED ALL OF THE AIRFIELDS, PARTICULARLY ETZION NEAR EILAT. HE SAW ONE POSSIBLE WAY OUT ON THE SETTLEMENTS THEMSELVES. IT WOULD INVOLVE JOINT RECOGNITION EXPLICITLY BE EGYPT AND ISRAEL THAT EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY TO THE INTERNATIONAL BORDER WOULD BE UNEQUIVOCALLY ACCEPTED BY ISRAEL, ALONG WITH THE PRINCIPLE THAT AFTER A TRANSITION PERIOD NO ISRAELI TROOPS WOULD BE STATIONED ON EGYPTIAN SOIL. THIS WOULD BE COMBINED WITH A RECOGNITION BY
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SADAT THAT AT THE END OF A SPECIFIED PERIOD, PERHAPS FIVE YEARS, MINOR FRONTIER MODIFICATIONS WERE NOT RULED OUT AS A RESULT OF NEGOTIATIONS TO TAKE PLACE AT THAT TIME TO FIX PERMANENTLY THE INTERNATIONAL BORDER. THIS WOULD PROVIDE A COOLING OFF PERIOD OF SUFFICIENT DURATION TO ALLOW THE SETTLEMENTS ISSUE TO BE SET ASIDE AND THE SECURITY QUESTIONS INVOLVED WITH SINAI TO BE RESOLVED. PERES ADMITTED THAT IT WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AT THE MOMENT FOR BEGIN TO PROMISE TO PULL OUT THE SETTLEMENTS, AND THAT THERE WOULD BE MANY IN HIS OWN PARTY WHO WOULD OPPOSE SUCH A DECISION. WHAT WAS NEEDED WAS A WAY TO DEFER THE QUESTION OF MINOR BORDER MODIFICATIONS TO A LATER STAGE, NOT CLOSING THE DOOR ON SOME EVENTUAL TERRITORIAL EXCHANGE, BUT RE-AFFIRMING TOTALLY EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY AND THE EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI FORCES FROM ALL EGYPT'S SOVEREIGN TERRITORY.

4. PERES WAS, AS USUAL, LUCID AND THOUGHTFUL IN DISCUSSING THE CURRENT DIPLOMATIC MORASS. HE REMAINS CONVINCED THAT SOMEHOW BOTH BEGIN AND SADAT CAN FIND A WAY TO GO FORWARD TOWARD A SETTLEMENT, ALTHOUGH HE

STOPPED SHORT OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER RABINS'S RECENTLY
REPEATED STATEMENT THAT BOTH LEADERS ARE NOW SO IRREVOCA-
BLY COMMITTED THAT THEY CANNOT TURN BACK.
LEWIS

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NNN

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